United Nations S/2000/387

Security Council

Distr.: General
5 May 2000

Original: English

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Tajikistan

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution 1274 (1999) of 12 November 1999. It brings up to date developments in Tajikistan, and the activities of the United Nations Mission of Observers in Tajikistan (UNMOT) since the last report, dated 14 March 2000 (S/2000/214).

II. Main developments

2. On 27 April, the newly formed bi-cameral parliament convened its first joint session. The election to the 33-seat National Assembly (upper house) was held, as scheduled, on 23 March and, in accordance with the Constitution, 25 deputies were elected by local assemblies and 8 were appointed by the President. The by-elections for the remaining two seats in the Assembly of Representatives (lower house), which were supposed to be held at the end of April, have not yet taken place. The Central Commission on Elections and Referenda has not yet announced a date.

3. S. Abdullo Nuri, leader of the United Tajik Opposition and Chairman of the Commission on National Reconciliation, held the last session of the Commission on 26 March, in the presence of members of the Contact Group of Guarantor States and International Organizations, and the press. The Minister for Foreign Affairs, Talbak Nazarov, represented the Government side. Both sides acknowledged that some tasks under the General Agreement on the Establishment of Peace and National Accord in Tajikistan (S/1997/510, annex I) remained unfinished and should be addressed by appropriate Government bodies. The Commission on National Reconciliation was formally dissolved by presidential decree as from 1 April.

4. The Contact Group of Guarantor States and International Organizations concluded its work on 11 April. In a statement issued on 18 April, the Contact Group recalled that it had been established at the request of the Tajik parties to monitor the implementation of the General Agreement and to provide expertise, consultation and good offices. To that end, it had held more than 130 meetings. The members of the Contact Group expressed their readiness to continue to support Tajikistan in its further efforts.

5. The Mission is proceeding with preparations for its eventual withdrawal. All field stations have been closed, and personnel and equipment withdrawn to Dushanbe. As at 30 April, there were 17 military observers in UNMOT, including medical personnel, who will leave the Mission together with the last group of civilian staff.

III. Overall assessment

6. Since this is the final report on UNMOT, it may be appropriate to reflect briefly on the efforts of the United Nations relating to the situation in Tajikistan since January 1993, when the Mission was established as a small political office in Dushanbe. At the time, the civil war, which had erupted almost immediately following independence in 1991, was still under way. Forces opposing the Government had been driven into neighbouring Afghanistan, and the instability caused by cross-border hostilities was reason for concern in the region. Efforts by successive Special Envoys of the Secretary-General to reach agreement on a ceasefire

00-41571 (E) 050500

and to resolve problems through political dialogue began to bear fruit in 1994, with the holding of the first round of inter-Tajik talks in Moscow, followed by a second round in Tehran.

7. The political process set in motion by those efforts was accompanied from the start by close cooperation with key Governments. The observers to the inter-Tajik talks, who later formed the Contact Group of Guarantor States and International Organizations, helped greatly in overcoming the crises and setbacks that were encountered in the process. At the first round of talks, a comprehensive agenda was adopted, comprising three clusters of issues related to the achievement of national reconciliation, namely, measures aimed at a political settlement in Tajikistan, the solution of the problem of refugees and internally displaced persons, and fundamental institutional issues and consolidation of the statehood of Tajikistan.

8. The signing, in September 1994, of the temporary ceasefire agreement and the subsequent dispatch of United Nations military observers enabled the United Nations to interact directly with local actors to support the political process also on the ground. At the time, the peacekeeping forces of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) were already deployed in the country, although their mandate did not cover the confrontation between the Government and the opposition. From the start, UNMOT enjoyed excellent relations with the CIS forces, as well as the Russian border forces in Tajikistan.

9. The inter-Tajik talks went through many crises and were often stalled over secondary questions by one or the other party, in order to gain time while political or military developments ran their course. For more than a year after the signing of the ceasefire agreement there was no serious, sustained fighting in the country. However, starting in July 1995, opposition forces began to make their way back from Afghanistan into the central region of the country. Early in 1996, the opposition launched an offensive in the Tavildara region and, by July 1996, the ceasefire had all but collapsed. Throughout that period, political dialogue was maintained with the help of interested Governments, notably the Russian Federation and the Islamic Republic of Iran. The signing, in December 1996, of the Khusdeh Agreement between President Rakhmonov and Mr. Nuri effectively restored the ceasefire agreement, paving the way for the rapid succession of agreements which culminated in the signing of the General Agreement on the Establishment of Peace and National Accord on 27 June 1997.

10. The security of its personnel was an overriding concern for UNMOT in the periods before and after the signing of the peace agreement. UNMOT had to function in a highly volatile environment: it endured two hostage incidents and serious acts of harassment and lost five members to hostile action; a sixth member was killed in circumstances which have yet to be clarified. Consequently, the Mission's freedom of movement and its ability to carry out its mandated function were severely limited for long periods of time. The support of the Security Council was decisive in helping UNMOT through those difficult times.

11. As in other theatres of operation, the timetable for the implementation of the peace agreement, initially set by the parties at 12 to 18 months, turned out to be ambitious and could not be maintained. The protocols that made up the agreements were couched in relatively broad terms, and much of the Mission's work involved assisting the parties in fine-tuning the details. The protocols were also loosely interlinked and the timing of the implementation of the political and military aspects was a matter of delicate balancing. Eventually, the date of the parliamentary election, which was dictated by the Constitution, provided the ultimate deadline to which the parties adhered.

12. The United Nations involvement in the peace process in Tajikistan had several characteristics which contributed to its overall positive outcome: the early engagement of the United Nations in the conflict; sustained political support of the Security Council and interested Member States in the region; cooperation with other organizations, notably the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, effective crisis management; and, above all, the clear will of the Tajik people to end the war and pursue a political solution.

IV. Future role of the United Nations

13. From the beginning, the mandated activities of UNMOT were channelled towards a long-term objective, namely, to promote peace and national reconciliation. The reintegration of the opposition into the political life of the country is a big step along that path. The recent parliamentary elections, while advancing the democratic process in Tajikistan, were, in the view of international observers, seriously flawed,

however. Armed elements continue to operate outside the control of the Government, contributing to insecurity. Daunting economic and social problems must also be addressed as a priority. Consequently, the possibility of renewed instability cannot be excluded, owing both to domestic factors and to the unstable situation in the region, notably in neighbouring Afghanistan. The continued support of the international community in the post-conflict phase will be important for Tajikistan's ability to sustain, and build on, the achievements of the peace process.

14. I shall be writing to the Security Council shortly about the possible establishment of a post-conflict peace-building office with the function of addressing institutional, social and economic development in an integrated manner, in order to consolidate peace and promote democracy.

V. Observations

15. Tajikistan is entering into a new phase of nation building, based on national reconciliation. While the United Nations involvement can be rated a success, it was not without its price. It is to be hoped that the achievements of the past years will be consolidated in the further strengthening of the institutions in the country in accordance with accepted democratic standards and the economic and social development of Tajik society.

16. As the mandate of UNMOT comes to an end, I should like to place on record my sincere appreciation for the steadfast support given the Mission by the Security Council, and by the members of the Contact Group. From its inception, UNMOT enjoyed the cooperation of the Government and opposition, and received the support of the Tajik people in its tasks. I trust that this support will be extended to the new political office as well.

17. Finally, I should like to pay tribute to Ivo Petrov, and all his predecessors, chief military observers, as well as the men and women, both international and local staff members, who served in UNMOT. Theirs was a frequently difficult and hazardous assignment. Above all, I should like to pay tribute to our colleagues who gave their lives in the service of peace in Tajikistan. Their sacrifice will not be forgotten.

Map No. 3887 Rev. 23 UNITED NATIONS
May 2000

Department of Public Information
Cartographic Section